THE
Dan Smoot Report

Vol. 16, No. 25 (Broadcast 774) June 22, 1970 Dallas, Texas

DAN SMOOT

SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING ETERNAL

THE NEW

A few years ago, Dean Russell, staff member of the Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, wrote an article on the American Bill of Rights, explaining what was *new* in the American system of constitutional government. From the article:

For the first time in known history, a written constitution specified that certain institutions and human relations were to be *outside* the authority of government. The government was specifically forbidden to infringe them or to violate them. . . .

This was a revolutionary concept of government! The idea of inalienable rights and individual freedom had never before been incorporated into a national constitution. Never before in history had the people said to the government: "Thou shalt not." Always, the government had been able to say to the people: "You may, or you must." Heretofore, government had *granted* certain freedoms and privileges to the people. But the Bill of Rights said, in effect:

"We the people are endowed by our Creator with natural rights and freedoms. The *only* reason for our having a government is to protect and defend these rights and freedoms that we already have as individuals. It is sheer folly to believe that government can give us something that already belongs to us." . . .

It was this philosophy of individual freedom and individual responsibility . . . that attracted to this country millions of persons from the government-oppressed peoples of Europe. They came here from every country in the world. . . . They were in search of *personal freedom*, not government-guaranteed "security." And as a direct result of the individual freedom specified by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, they earned the greatest degree of security ever enjoyed by any people anywhere.

THE DAN SMOOT REPORT is published weekly by The Dan Smoot Report, Inc., Box 9538, Dallas, Texas 75214 (office at 6441 Gaston Ave.). Subscriptions: $18.00 for 2 years; $10.00, 1 year; $6.00, 6 months. Dan Smoot was born in Missouri, reared in Texas. With BA and MA degrees from SMU (1938 and 1940), he joined the Harvard faculty (1941) as a Teaching Fellow, doing graduate work in American civilization. From 1942 to 1951, he was an FBI agent; from 1951 to 1955, a commentator on national radio and television. In 1955, he started his present independent, free-enterprise business: publishing this REPORT and abbreviating it each week for radio and TV broadcasts available for commercial sponsorship by business firms.

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Those new Americans swelled the tide of immigrants by writing the praise of freedom in their letters to relatives and friends who still lived in the countries with *strong* governments, with *one-man* rule, with *government ownership* of the means of production, with *government-guaranteed* "security," with *government* housing, and *state-controlled* education.

Their letters read, in effect: "Here, the government guarantees you nothing except life, liberty, and the right to own whatever you have honestly acquired. Here you have the personal responsibility that goes with individual freedom. There is no law or custom that prevents you from rising as high as you are able. You can associate with anyone who wishes to associate with you. Here in America you can do as you please as long as you do not violate the rights of other persons to do as they please. These rights are recorded in the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The same documents specify that three-fourths of the states must be in agreement before these rights can be taken away. And, of course, it is foolish to imagine that the people will ever voluntarily give up their freedom."

Such letters would not be completely true today, because that freedom is gradually being lost. . . . Freedom is seldom lost by a direct vote on the subject. In our case, it just seems to be *seeping* away. The Bill of Rights still exists on paper, but the *spirit* that caused it to be written is disappearing. When that spirit is completely gone, the written words will mean nothing. . . .

Thus it behooves us to inquire why that spirit is now weak, and how it can be revived.

No one person is responsible for sapping that spirit of individualism. No one political party is to blame. The people are as responsible as the elected and appointed leaders. It is we the people who seem to have forgotten that freedom and responsibility are inseparable. It is we the people who are discarding the concept of government that brought forth the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

In short, few of us seem to want to keep government out of our personal affairs and responsibilities. Many of us seem to favor various types of government-guaranteed and compulsory "security." We *say* that we want personal freedom, but we *demand* government housing, government price controls, government-guaranteed jobs and wages. We *boast* that we are responsible persons, but we *vote* for candidates who promise us special privileges, government pensions, government subsidies, and government electricity.

Such schemes are directly contrary to the spirit of the Bill of Rights. Our heritage is being lost more through weakness than through deliberate design. The Bill of Rights still shines in all its splendor, but many of us are looking in another direction. Many of us are drifting back to that old concept of government that our forefathers feared and rejected. Many of us are no longer willing to accept individual responsibility for our own welfare. Yet personal freedom cannot exist without individual responsibility.

Thus, the American people are on the verge of a final decision. We must choose between the destruction caused by government paternalism, and the security insured by individual freedom with individual responsibility as expressed in the Bill of Rights. There is no other choice.

THE OLD

In 1959, Doubleday & Company published Taylor Caldwell's *Dear and Glorious Physician*, a monumental, historical novel about the life and times of Luke, the Beloved Physician, author of the third Book in the New Testament.

The times were the days of decadence of ancient Rome. The commentaries on Rome in her latter days have stabbing significance to all men who love liberty — especially to Americans who understand what has been happening to our na-

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tion during the past 40 years. Below are samplings from *Dear and Glorious Physician.*

Old Diodorus, patriot, soldier, and senator of Rome, makes his farewell speech to the Roman Senate, trying vainly to awaken the venal politicians to manliness and patriotism. Diodorus says:

"Let me move your hearts! It is not yet too late! The course of empire leads only to death. Senators, look at me! Listen with your hearts, and not with your evil minds. Turn back to liberty, to frugality, to morality, to peace, to Rome. . . .

"Bow no longer to false Caesars, who, defying our very Constitution, issue mandates against the welfare of Rome and place themselves above the law which our fathers formulated, and for which they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

"Rome was conceived in faith and in justice, and in the worship of God, and in the name of the manhood of man. Return our country to the rule of law and strike down the rule by men. Restore the treasuries. Withdraw our legions from foreign lands which hate us, and will destroy us at a moment's notice when it serves their interests. Repeal the taxes which crush those who work hard and industriously.

"Tell your multitudes that they must work or they shall starve. Drive from the Palatine itself the masses of toadies and self-seekers and thieves! . . .

"Cleanse this chamber of rascals and mountebanks and demagogues who declaim in rounded phrases that the welfare of the people is close to their hearts but who really mean that they will do the will of the mob in exchange for vile plaudits and power, and bribery!"

Cowardly silence greeted Diodorus' speech.

Later, Luke is talking to Diodorus' son, Priscus. Priscus is also a soldier of Rome. Like his father before him, he knows his nation is dying; but unlike his father, Priscus has no stomach for lost causes. He wants to live out his life in ease and pleasure. He thinks he might do something about Rome, if there were anything he could do; but others had tried and failed; so, why bother? Luke is trying to goad his conscience:

Priscus shrugged. "All too true, perhaps," he said. "But I am several centuries too late. . . . What can I do about Rome now, in my generation? Let us be reasonable, Lucanus. . . .

"I grant you that you are correct. But I have told you that my father was born too late. He died of a broken heart. I was born even later. I do not intend to die of a broken heart. What price my attempting to call even a single man to sobriety and heroism? It would accomplish nothing."

Luke replied:

"Priscus, you as a husband and a father, and most particularly a father, can cultivate the masculinity of free and noble men in your children; a man must always begin in his own family, and then reach forth for his neighbors. He may fail, but at least he has tried. It is not in the failing that a man is judged, but by the lack of his efforts. At the last, man is judged singly, and never in the mass."

THE ETERNAL

Mr. Harold Hill, president of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore and a consultant in the space program, has told a most remarkable story which found its way into a few newspapers — and eventually into the evening newscast of Bob Gooding, WFAA-TV, Dallas. Here it is as related by Mr. Gooding:

Mr. Hill stated that he thought one of the most amazing things that God has for us today happened to our astronauts and space scientists at Green Belt, Maryland. They were trying to determine the position of the sun, moon and planets 100 years and 1000 years from now. In order to do this, they had to plot the orbits through past centuries.

They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries, and suddenly it came to a halt. The computer signaled that there was something wrong either with the information fed into it or with the results compared to the standards. They called in the

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service department to check it out and found nothing technically wrong. The computer still came up with the same discrepancy . . . a day was missing in space in elapsed time. The scientists were dumfounded. There was no answer.

One of the team remembered a reference to the sun standing still in the Bible. Upon checking, they found in the Book of Joshua a pretty "ridiculous" statement for anybody who has "common sense." According to the Scripture, Joshua was concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy; and if darkness fell, they would overpower him; so Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still. "So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." (Joshua 10:13) There was the missing day!

They checked the computers going back to the time it was written and found it was close, but not close enough. The elapsed time that was missing back in Joshua's day was 23 hours and 20 minutes . . . not a whole day. They again read the passage and there it said, "*about* (approximately) a whole day." Apparently, those little words in the Bible mean something. This still did not account for the other missing 40 minutes. The 40 minutes had to be found, because, in projecting special orbits, it would be multiplied many times over.

Again the man remembered somewhere in the Bible that it said the sun went backwards. In 2nd Kings, Chapter 20, Hezekiah, on his deathbed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah who told him that he was not going to die. Hezekiah did not believe him and asked for a sign as proof. Isaiah said, " . . . shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?" Hezekiah replied, "It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees." (2 Kings 20:9-10) Ten degrees is exactly 40 minutes!

Twenty-three hours and twenty minutes, in Joshua, plus forty minutes in 2nd Kings make the missing twenty-four hours the space travelers had to log in the logbook as being the missing day in the universe.

NOT YET TOO LATE FOR US

Petrarch, great Italian poet, said:

"Behold, the relics of Rome, the image of her pristine greatness! Neither time nor the barbarian can boast the merit of this stupendous destruction: it was perpetrated by her own citizens, by the most illustrious of her sons."

Petrarch was pronouncing an epitaph upon Rome, and it was too late for Romans to hearken.

It is not yet too late for Americans. There are still enough Americans who have kept the faith which is our strength: faith in God and faith in the Bible as absolute truth, the revealed Word of God.

And there are still among us enough men and women who, like Luke, understand, cherish, and support the eternal principles on which our society was built.

Yet, there are also many Americans like Priscus of ancient Rome: they know their nation is dying, but will not trouble themselves to do anything about it, because, they say, the cause is already lost.

Where do you stand? With Priscus or with Luke?

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